

THE NEW STATUS OF LIBRARY WORK WITH THE

BLIND

Howard Haycraft

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**M.C. MIGEL LIBRARY  
AMERICAN PRINTING  
HOUSE FOR THE BLIND**

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# The New Status of Library Work with the Blind

By Howard Haycraft

WHEN President Hoover's signature made the Pratt-Smoot Bill a law on February 28, 1931, the event marked the beginning of a virtually new era in library work with the blind.

The law went into effect on July 1, 1931. It makes available federal funds of \$100,000 annually for the manufacture and purchase of specially selected braille books for the *adult* blind, to be circulated thru 19 designated libraries located in various sections of the country. This amount is in addition to the \$75,000 appropriated annually since 1927 (and smaller sums previously) for textbooks for the blind, and is the first substantial recognition by the government of a branch of library work which has performed noteworthy service, despite handicaps, for many years.

While it may be said that enactment of the appropriation marks a turning point in library work with the blind, the new status is evidenced not so much by any startling change in methods as by quiet expansion along established lines and increased efficiency and usefulness of existing organization and equipment.

The decision to circulate the books purchased with the new funds thru a limited number of library centers, altho at variance with popular library theory of wide, de-centralized distribution, is thoroly in line with the policy which—with some experimental deviation—has guided the work up to this time. Because of the limited field, the expense, and the highly technical nature of the work, concentration rather than diffusion of resources is favored in some measure by practically all leaders as a necessary economy.

Centralization, in fact, is really the means to widest distribution, Miss Lucille A. Goldthwaite, Librarian for the Blind of the New York Public Library, points out. Circulation of books among the blind, she explains, is a basically

different problem from distribution in the general library field.

The number of blind "readers" in a given locality is so small, with the possible exception of the very largest centers, that scattered local collections tend to make books *less* attainable rather than to facilitate their distribution. It is generally found where the idea is tried that in a relatively short time all of the local blind readers have read all of the books in the local collection, or all that they care to, and are again drawing from the better-equipped, if more distant, established libraries—while the home collection falls into disuse. Distance is a negligible factor in circulation (ever since 1904 books for the blind have been transported post-free between recognized libraries and readers) and it is thru the widely known established centers, more complete and better organized, that the greatest numbers of readers are served, irrespective of location.

## The Librarian's Part

This does not mean that there is any lack of opportunity for the general library to participate in the work, according to Miss Goldthwaite. The best service, tho, will be performed by those who participate thru cooperation.

"The general librarian can help most," she says, "by acquiring accurate information, by locating blind readers, and by imparting the information to them."

It will be the aim of this article to present such information as concisely as possible.

There are two principal sources of reading matter for the blind: the several braille presses or printing plants which produce, by means of metal plates, books, magazines, and music for sale to blind readers and to libraries; and the volunteer workers of the Red Cross who make books by hand, using either the braille "slate," a stencil-like mechanism, or the "writer," which somewhat resembles a

## Decorative Maps

R. R. Bowker Co., 62 West 45th St., New York, N.Y.  
Colored story and history maps (\$2.50 ea.).

Consolidated Map Co., 446 West Ferry St., Buffalo, N.Y.  
Send for their trade catalog.

The John Day Co., 25 West 25th St., New York, N.Y.  
MAP OF LINDBERGH'S FLIGHTS. 29 x 40 inches. Colored. \$1.85.

A CHILD'S MAP OF THE ANCIENT WORLD. 33 x 25 inches. Colored. \$1.50.

E. P. Dutton, 300 Fourth Ave., New York, N.Y.  
An ANCIENT MAPPE OF FAIRYLAND, designed by Bernard Sleigh. \$5.

John Hancock Mutual Life Insurance Co., 197 Clarendon St., Boston, Mass.  
For one cent will send a black and white map of New England with places of historical and literary interest.

The Ship Model Shop, Provincetown, Mass.  
Ask to be put on their mailing list.

F. A. Stokes Co., 443 Fourth Ave., New York, N.Y.  
The ALL MOTHER GOOSE PANORAMA. 24 x 51 inches. \$7.50.

THE PICTURE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES. 17 x 40 inches. \$7.50.

## Miscellaneous Decorative Material

Art Center, 65 East 56th St., New York, N.Y.  
Reproductions of Cizek prints.

Marion Beaufait, 20 West 43rd St., New York, N.Y.  
Distributor of the Fernand Nathan prints. Most attractive imported French prints, 38 x 14 inches. May be purchased only in sets.

Educational Playthings, Inc., 20 East 69th St., New York, N.Y.  
See their pamphlet, "Selected Books and Pictures for Young Children" (Price 35c).

Foundation Press, Inc., Bulkley Building, Cleveland, O.  
The Pageant of a Nation Series. Forty color reproductions of historical paintings

by J. L. G. Ferris. Expensive but effective. Have appeared in miniature on covers of the Literary Digest.

Great Northern Railway, St. Paul, Minn.  
Blackfeet Indian portfolio. Twelve excellent portraits in color. \$1.00.

Italian Book Co., Inc., 145-147 Mulberry St., New York, N.Y.  
Importers of an Italian picture book, "La Giornata dei Piccini" by Lina Schwarz, cost 90c, printed in bright colors one picture to a page. Taken apart and mounted this makes an attractive frieze.

Polish Book Importing Co., Inc., 38 Union Square, New York, N.Y.  
Send for their catalog of Polish Ethnographic Friezes.

## Hygiene

The following have a wealth of pamphlet and poster material, a good bit of which is sent free on request. Also ask to be put on their mailing list.

American Child Health Association, 370 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y.

Child Study Association of America, 54 West 74th St., New York, N.Y.

Cleanliness Institute, 45 East 17th St., New York, N.Y.

Dairymen's League, 11 West 42nd St., New York, N.Y.

National Child Welfare Association, 70 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y.

National Dairy Council, 221 North La Salle St., Chicago, Ill.

## Birds

Joseph H. Dodson, Inc., Kankakee, Ill.  
See their catalog of bird pictures and bird houses.

National Association of Audubon Societies, 1974 Broadway, New York, N.Y.  
Colored bird portraits, post card size, 150 in a set, for \$1.00. Also large bird charts.

typewriter. Any number of copies of plate-made books may be "embossed"—the braille equivalent of printing—but only a few copies can be duplicated from a hand-made volume.

No recent estimate has been made of the number of titles which have been done into braille by hand. Of plate-embossed books, there are about 2,000 titles now available thru libraries and by purchase. (This figure refers to works in braille grade 1½, which was adopted in 1918 as the official American written "language" for the blind. Books in other types will be mentioned later.) A union catalog of these 2,000 has been recently published in embossed form and may be borrowed by readers from any library for the blind or purchased from the American Braille Press (see address below) for \$2.

The principal braille presses are:

American Printing House for the Blind, Louisville, Ky.

Clovernook Printing House for the Blind, Mt. Healthy, Ohio.

Howe Memorial Press, Perkins Institution, Watertown, Mass.

Universal Braille Press, 730 North Vermont Ave., Los Angeles

American Brotherhood of Free Reading for the Blind, 1544 Hudson Ave., Los Angeles.

Illinois School for the Blind, Jacksonville, Ill.

All of these presses publish books, with the exception of Illinois School for

the Blind, which embosses music only. The American Printing House for the Blind and the Howe Memorial Press publish music as well as books.

An important press producing em-

ALPHABET	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j
NUMERALS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0
WHOLE-WORD	a	but	can	do	every	from	go	have	just	
Line 1	••	••	••	••	••	••	••	••	••	••
ALPHABET	k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r	s	t
WHOLE-WORD	knowledge	like	more	not	people	quite	rather	so	that	
Line 2	••	••	••	••	••	••	••	••	••	••
ALPHABET	u	v	x	y	z	ç	é	à	é	à
WHOLE-WORD	us	very	it	you	as	and	for	of	the	with
PART-WORD										
Line 3	••	••	••	••	••	••	••	••	••	••
w, etc.	â	ê	î	ô	û	ë	î	ü	ö	æ
WHOLE-WORD	gh	sh	th	wh	ed	er	ou	ow		
PART-WORD										
Line 4	••	••	••	••	••	••	••	••	••	••
WHOLE-WORD					en				in	in
PART-WORD										
PUNCTUATION	,	:	:	.		l	( )	" ?	"	
Line 5	••	••	••	••	••	••	••	••	••	••
PART-WORD										
HYPHEN, ETC.	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Line 6	••	••	••	••	••	••	••	••	••	••
fraction line		ing			numeral sign		ar			
		ö					ä æ			
Line 7	••	••	••	••	••	••	••	••	••	••
COMPOUND SIGNS	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	••••	••••	••••	••••	••••	••••	••••	••••	••••	••••

**INSTRUCTIONS**

Braille is a system of embossed writing formed by the use of all the possible combinations of six dots arranged in a group, or cell, thus  $\begin{smallmatrix} 1 & 2 \\ 3 & 4 \\ 5 & 6 \end{smallmatrix}$  each dot being known by its number. Both in reading and in writing, dots 1-3-5 are nearer the beginning of the line than dots 2-4-6; and the sequence of dots is therefore the same in each case. Reading proceeds forward from left to right, while writing on the braille tablet proceeds forward from right to left. The possible combinations of the six dots give sixty-three signs. Signs occupying more than one cell are termed "Compound" signs.

### THE BRAILLE ALPHABET AND CONTRACTIONS

bossed material for American use but not located in this country is the American Braille Press, 74, Rue Lauriston, Paris.

It is not believed that operation of the new law will bring about any extensive change in the existing organization of this department of the work except, perhaps, a somewhat sharper division of the kinds of service rendered by the various



### THE LIBRARY FOR THE BLIND AS AN INSTRUCTION CENTER

A class of instruction in transcribing braille by hand in the New York Public Library. The woman on the left is using a braille "slate," the one in the center a braille "writer." A volunteer teacher on the right is dictating the exercise to be embossed.

agencies. The presses are expected to manufacture the books which will receive widest use, and the valuable resources of the Red Cross, it is hoped, will be utilized in the transcribing of works for which there is a special but not sufficiently general demand to warrant publishing under the government fund.

The administration of the fund is under the direction of the Library of Congress. Dr. Herman H. B. Meyer, long director of the Legislative Reference Service Library, has been chosen to supervise the work.

The regional libraries thru which the books manufactured and purchased with the new funds will be circulated are:

California State Library, Sacramento, Calif.  
Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Chicago Public Library, Chicago, Ill.  
Cincinnati Public Library, Cincinnati, Ohio.  
Cleveland Public Library, Cleveland, Ohio.  
Denver Public Library, Denver, Colo.

Detroit Public Library, Lothrop Branch, Detroit, Mich.

Free Library of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, Pa.

Georgia Library Commission, Atlanta, Ga.

Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

Library of Hawaii, Honolulu, Hawaii.

Michigan State Library for the Blind, Saginaw, Mich.

National Library for the Blind, 1800 D. St., N.W., Washington, D. C.

New York Public Library, New York, N. Y.

New York State Library, Albany, N. Y.

Perkins Institution Library, Watertown, Mass.

St. Louis Public Library, St. Louis, Mo.

Seattle Public Library, Seattle, Wash.

Texas State Library, Austin, Texas.

Canada, it may be remarked, is served by the excellent Canadian National Institute Library, 64 Baldwin St., Toronto, Ont.

At present the collections in these libraries are somewhat unequal in size (a difficulty which will be partially and gradually remedied by the new appropriation). Nevertheless, readers are asked

to address first the library nearest to them and apply elsewhere only when necessary. All of the libraries have books in braille grade 1½. Many of them also circulate titles in braille grade 2 and in Moon type. (It is expected that ten percent of the government fund will be put into books in the latter type which is more expensive to reproduce but will never, according to those who know the work, be entirely superseded by braille because it is so much simpler to learn.) Nearly every collection contains, as well, a certain number of hand-made volumes not to be found elsewhere. Each library will furnish information, upon request, regarding its collection.

### Publication Plans

It is planned by the administrators of the fund to issue at least one fiction and one non-fiction title each month, to begin with. "Editions" will be about 60 copies for fiction and from 35 to 50 copies of non-fiction. The tentative schedule of distribution is: 4 copies of each fiction title to each of the larger libraries, 2 each to the remaining; 2 copies of each non-fiction title to each library.

It is not yet possible to determine what total the annual output of new titles may reach when the system becomes established. Production of embossed books is very expensive. An ordinary one volume biography in ink print may require four or five volumes in braille. The cost, of course, varies with the size of the book; on the old basis it was frequently \$500 or more. It is probable that the quantity production made possible by the new fund will reduce costs, over a period of time, and that the rate of publication will steadily increase.

Under the new plan the books to be made from government funds (and they will constitute the greater part of the annual output) will be selected with the advice of the American Library Association's Committee for Work with the Blind. This is in itself an important advance for heretofore, understandably enough, there have been no definite standards of selection and methods of choice have lacked coordination.

The first titles to be issued under the new system are Willa Cather's *Shadows*

*on the Rock* and Stuart Chase's *The Nemesis of American Business*. They are now in the libraries and available to borrowers.

Other titles in press at the present time or planned for the future include:

*The Epic of America*, James Truslow Adams

*The Rise of American Civilization*, C. A. Beard

*The Old Wives' Tale*, Arnold Bennett  
*Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer

*English Synonyms, Antonyms, and Prepositions*, James C. Fernald

*The New Map of Asia*, H. A. Gibbons

*The New Map of Europe*, H. A. Gibbons

*Humanity Uprooted*, Maurice Hindus  
*Les Misérables*, Victor Hugo

*The Human Habitat*, Huntington Ellsworth

*Finding the Trail of Life*, Rufus M. Jones

*The Conquest of Happiness*, Bertrand Russell

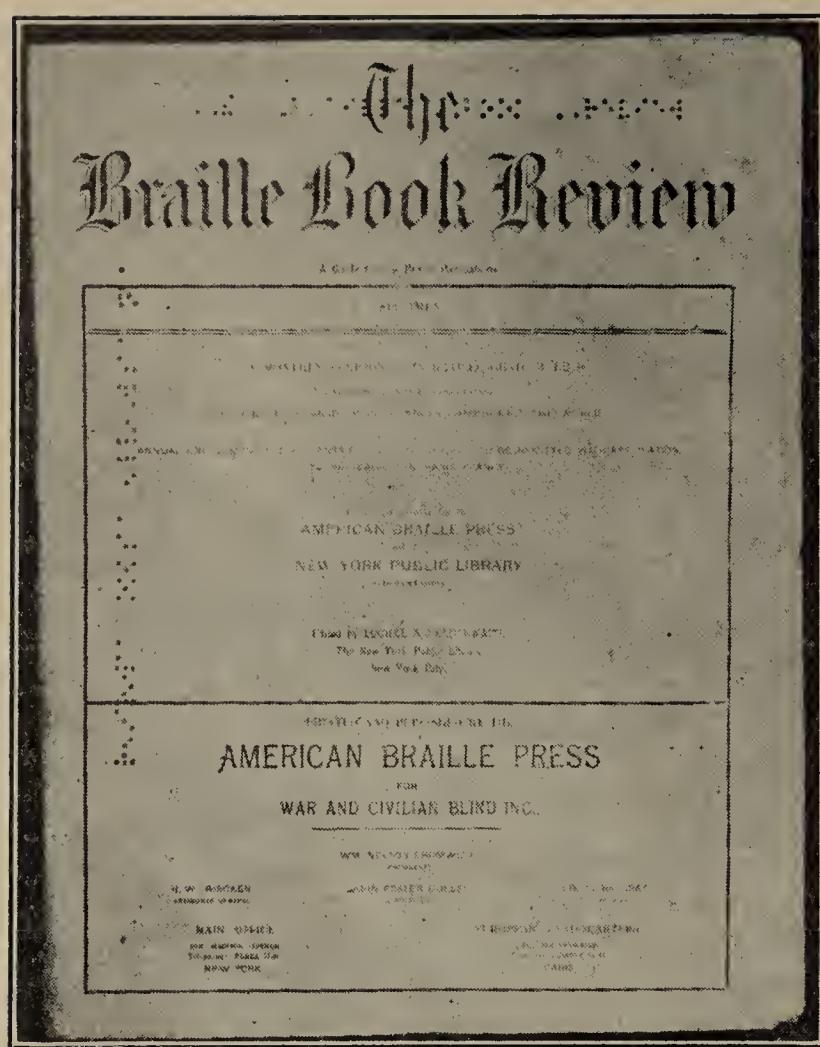
*The Standard Operas*, George P. Upton

*The Causes of the War of Independence*, Claude H. Van Tyne

### The Braille Book Review

What is perhaps one of the most important developments in library work with the blind in several years has come into being in connection with the new production of books. It is the establishment of *The Braille Book Review*, "A Guide to Braille Publications," a monthly publication made possible by the cooperation of the New York Public Library—thru the Henry F. Homes Fund—and the American Braille Press, by which it is published in Paris. Miss Lucille A. Goldthwaite is the editor.

"Our aim is to stimulate an interest in reading among those who read by touch," states the foreword to the first number, a specimen issue. "While every effort is made to cultivate reading among adults who see, little has been done to tempt the blind reader to develop the same habit. The Federal appropriation of \$100,000 is an accomplished fact. It has become necessary to develop some means by which readers may keep themselves informed of new publications and



**A NEW WINDOW FOR THE BLIND**  
 The *Braille Book Review*, which will introduce blind readers to the books made possible by the new \$100,000 Congressional appropriation. The domino-like dots at the top and on the left margin are embossed braille characters spelling the title.

be given some technical aid in the use of the library resources of the country. *The Braille Book Review* will attempt to give this service."

*The Braille Book Review* will include announcements of new publications available to the blind reader, book reviews and notes, reading lists, biographical sketches of authors, and articles of general literary interest. The reviews will be taken from the A.L.A. Catalog and Booklist, the Book REVIEW DIGEST, and the general reviewing journals. The biographical sketches will be reprinted from LIVING AUTHORS.

It will be of interest to WILSON BULLETIN readers to know that it was the sketches reprinted in the specimen issue which inspired the first comment received on the new magazine. "Please continue this section," wrote a blind reader in the South, "as it makes books more interesting when we know details of authors' lives, just as 'fans' read the moving picture magazines."

The first regular issue of *The Braille Book Review* was issued in January, 1932. The contents are listed here to give an idea of its scope:

Book Announcements

Book Reviews: *Shadows on the Rock* (from *The Saturday Review of Literature*) and *The Nemesis of American Business* (N. Y. Herald-Tribune "Books")

Karlfeldt, Nobel Prize Winner

Georgia Library Commission, Book Service to Blind Readers

Revised List of Books from the United States Government

Abbreviations of Names of Libraries  
Library and Press Notes

"Profile": Willa Cather (from *The New Yorker*)

Biographical Sketches: Edna Ferber and P. G. Wodehouse (from LIVING AUTHORS)

Greek Epic Poetry (from *The Story of the World's Literature*) by John Macy

There will be no subscription charge for *The Braille Book Review*. It will be distributed free to blind readers throughout the world, upon payment of an annual enrollment fee of 50 cents to cover mailing charges. This should be remitted when application is made. Applications should be addressed to the American Braille Press at 74, Rue Lauriston, Paris.

With the addition of this latest magazine, the field of periodicals for the blind becomes quite representative. Some of the better known embossed magazines are:

*The International Braille Magazine*

*The Ziegler Magazine*

*The March of Events* (selected material from *World's Work*)

*The Weekly News* (current events furnished by the *Outlook and Independent*)

*Our Special* (for women readers)

*The braille Reader's Digest*

*The braille Outlook for the Blind*

Several of the magazines listed above are distributed without cost, or for only a small charge, to blind readers. Full information may be obtained from any library for the blind. The *braille Readers' Digest*, however, is a subscription publication, published by the American Printing House for the Blind. The annual subscription price is \$10. The *Outlook*

*For the Blind*, the official quarterly organ of the American Foundation for the Blind, has been widely known for many years as an ink print periodical and the embossed edition has but recently appeared. It will henceforth be issued in both forms.

Altho the periodicals just listed are principally general in nature, there is also a number in special fields. Several embossed religious magazines are issued regularly. In music there is the *Music Review*, published by the American Braille Press and edited by L. W. Rodenberg of the Illinois School for the Blind, himself blind and generally regarded as the leading American authority on embossed music, and George L. Raverat, Secretary General of the American Braille Press.

Music is one field of enjoyment and livelihood where the handicaps of the blind are reduced to a minimum. Often greater proficiency than the individual would otherwise attain is the result of heightened senses of touch and hearing. The reproduction of music in embossed form is less expensive than the "brailing" of reading matter, and publications are extensive. In addition to hundreds of simpler compositions, complete scores of several symphonies have been embossed.

The New York Public Library, which has long been recognized as leading in this branch of the work, is the principal source of music for the blind. Its collection serves the entire country. An embossed catalog of available music may be obtained from the library for ten cents.

Libraries for the blind have still another important function in addition to the acquisition and circulation of embossed "reading material." Many of them serve also as instruction centers in the transcribing of braille, as shown by the illustration accompanying this article. Full information regarding this aspect of the service may be obtained from the individual libraries.

There are two important ink print libraries on the subject of blindness. The foremost and older is located at Perkins Institution at Watertown, Mass. It is not a circulating collection. The other is that of the American Foundation for the Blind and is available for borrowing by mail.

In any discussion of library work with the blind some mention should be made of the Visagraph, a mechanism, still in the experimental stage, which exactly duplicates by means of the selenium ray an entire printed page in embossed form on a thin metal sheet. If this invention can be improved to a point where the expense of operation is not prohibitive it may revolutionize present methods. At the moment, however, there are certain practical difficulties which indicate that perfection is some distance in the future.

The Pratt-Smoot Law has placed library work with the blind on a new footing. Every branch of the service is in a position to advance and increase its usefulness in ways that have never been possible before. The general library may play its part in the new era by guiding and directing—by directing the blind to sources where help and pleasure await them.

### Annual Awards to Contributors

I: For the best article published in the WILSON BULLETIN during the present volume (September 1931 to June 1932 inclusive) a prize of fifty dollars will be awarded. Announcement of the award will be made in the June 1932 issue. The editorial staff of the WILSON BULLETIN will select the article chiefly on the basis of interest and value to other librarians. Style will be the secondary criterion of choice.

II: The WILSON BULLETIN pays one dollar each on publication for all photographs ac-

cepted for reproduction. This includes library photographs of any description, exterior or interior, altho interior photographs are usually preferred. At the end of the present volume, in the issue for next June, two grand prizes of twenty-five dollars each will be awarded: one for the best picture of reference works in use or on display in libraries; and one for the most interesting library picture of any other description—the choice to be made by our editorial staff from the photographs published in the WILSON BULLETIN from September 1931 to June 1932 inclusive.

# S H A Department of Helps, ?



## A MODERN LIBRARY WITH UNIQUE FEATURES

An interior view, from the Delivery Room gallery into the main Reading Room, of the impressive \$175,000 Public Library just opened at Winchester, Massachusetts, is shown above.

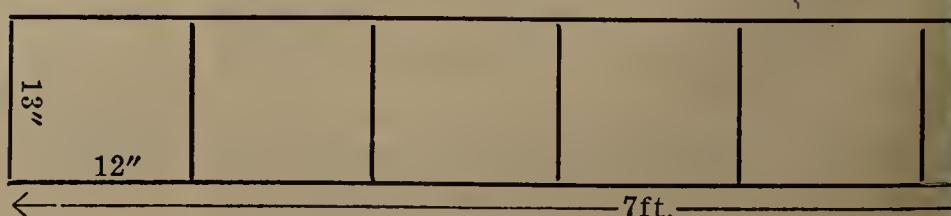
Note the slanting bottom book-shelves. Human nature being what it is, people will not (perhaps cannot) freely stoop down to inspect or take out books from the usually inaccessible bottom shelf. These title shelves make every book easily visible and accessible.

The lighting system at the Winchester Public Library is said to be entirely new to the United States and far superior in both appearance and quality of illumination to the general practice in library lighting. The light comes from oblongs of flashed opal glass running along the ceiling longitudinally on each side. Desk lamps are unnecessary in any part of the room, so closely does the illumination approximate daylight.

This photograph was taken before the library was ready for use, before the books were all in place, and before the specially designed modernistic andirons had been introduced.

Robert Coit and Kilham, Hopkins & Greeley were the associate architects of this intelligently modern public library, which boasts of a full-fledged art gallery.

Another clever S Cut is diagrammed rian Purnell write Referring to page (Miss Stember's pro large picture books s examined and repl heaval). We solve seven foot shelf tha high and dividing i twelve-inch lengths. made of  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch vene strength and takes u The sections hold bu ber of books so that shelf full leaning at being rapidly broken shape.



HOW TO SHELVE LARGE PICTURE

Share your short

Photomount  
Pamphlet  
Binder

Gaylord Bros. Inc.

Makers  
Syracuse, N. Y.  
PAT. JAN 21, 1908

